Christ has Broken the Barrier Between Nations (Eph. 2:11-22):

Challenge to Nigerian Christians As Peace Initiators

by

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Abstract

The fundamental difference between the Jews and Gentiles is circumcision. This fact introduced a serious barrier between them. This is to the extent that they could not mingle or relate cordially. Thus, their relationship was like the one that exists between lepers and the healthy. Hence, Gentiles were excluded from membership of Israel, aliens with no part in the covenants of the fatherhood. Christ is the unifying force between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. With his blood, he absolved the Gentiles of all that used to distance them and made the circumcised to know that he is the end of the Law (Rom 10:4). Thus, through his blood he destroyed the hostility that used to be between them. Vv 19-22 expresses the value of this newly founded unity in Christ. Despite the above, there is still divisions in the Church today, hence, absence of peace in Christendom. This article therefore answers why it is so. It aims at showing that rivalry that exists among believers, exposes their insincerity and hypocrisy. It argues that if all Christians understand the mind of Christ in destroying the barrier that existed between nations (Gentiles and Jews), then the whole Christendom would have remained peaceful and truly under one head. Unless this happens, there will be no end to sectarianism, tribalism, and nepotism among Christian believers in Nigeria. The outcome of this article will be significant to all Christians. The method will be exegetical analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 and Library research.

Key Words: Christ, Break, Barrier, Nations

Introduction:

The vocation of Israel is to be a light to the nations. This vocation was given to them successively through the covenant which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob entered with God and finally with their descendants through Moses. This covenant divided humanity into two, the Jews and the nations or the Jews and the Gentiles, or, the Jews and non-Jews, or circumcised and uncircumcised, alternatively still, believers and unbelievers. Even among the Gentiles, there are divisions. The Gentile world was divided into two, the Greeks and the Barbarians - the knowledgeable people, the philosophers, the Greeks on the one hand; and the ignoramuses, the illiterate, the Barbarians on the other hand. They also looked like a warring faction who would never agree to sit together.

It is not doubtful that the original plan of God in sending his only Son into the world was to unite the whole people of the earth into one family and return back to him as they were at creation before the 'fall of humankind'. It is a popular maxim that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a step. The call of Israel was the first bold initiative God made in the unification and reconciliation of mankind with himself. This vocation, no doubt was seriously misunderstood by the Jews. They never believed that the Gentiles could be saved, consequently, they assumed that salvation is for them alone. As a result they hated the Gentiles so much.

When Jesus sent his disciples on their first missionary enterprise, he told them not to enter into the house of the Gentiles but rather to go into the house of the lost Israelites (Matt. 10:5-7). The implication is that Christ wanted to start with the gathering of the Jews so that through them salvation will reach to the ends of the earth. After Jesus' ministry here on earth, and indeed after his death and resurrection humanity came to be divided into three groups namely, the Jews, Gentiles and Christians/new people of God. The implication is that Christianity is not a sect in Judaism; instead, Christianity is a combination of converts from Judaism and Gentiles. Christianity led to the deterioration of the membership of Judaism (Matt. 23:38) as well as Gentiles. Hence in Christianity, there is no "difference between Jews and Gentiles, between those who are near and those who are far. . ." (Gal. 3:28). Put in other words, Christ through his death and resurrection destroyed the barrier between people (Eph. 2:11-22).

During the early time of the church, all believers called themselves brothers and sisters. They even had things in common. The one name that united them was Christ. They were not interested from where one hails from. They were not racially motivated. Their interest is, "is he or she a believer?" Once this is ascertained every other thing is secondary. To prove to Nigerian Christians the importance of togetherness under Christ, the early missionaries to evangelize them formed Christian villages where the Christians gathered and lived together to avoid the persecutions of their unbelieving relatives and for them to run away from the persecutions of the pagans. Anyone in the then Christian village was seen as a brother or sister, no more no less. Functions were shared then in the Christian village by merit and not by where you came from. Today, the Christendom is factionalized and thus defies the prayer of Jesus, "I pray that they may

all be one" (John 17:21). Even among different factions, there are more factions based on ethnicity. This is most prominent for instance in the Catholic Church and Anglican communion, because of their population. We shall therefore use Catholic denomination as a case study.

This work shall be divided into five major sections namely, the Jews as the chosen of God; the Gentiles as those outside the promises of God; the mission of Christ in Ephesians 2:11-22; application in the Nigerian Catholic context and finally, conclusion.

Jesus and the Jews as the Chosen People of God

The name Israel is very common in the Bible; most often used alone or in phrases such as 'sons of Israel', 'house of Israel', 'kingdom of Israel'. It is better referred to as an ethnic group that are united in the worship of the monotheistic God - Yahweh and spoke Hebrew as their original language. They occupied first in a loose tribal organization and later in a single monarchy, then in two, the territory of Canaan or Palestine. It has a complicated history that no one can easily call them a descendant of one man. "Modern historical research shows that the origin and nature of this group cannot be explained simply by descent from Jacob through his twelve sons; hence the question of when Israel began to exist as Israel and what it included territorially and ethnically is complex and admits no easy answer" (Mckenzie, 404). In the course of time, Yahweh entered into and continually renewed His covenant which he started into with Moses with the house of Israel, this time around with David and his household. This covenant is stated in the oracle of Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7:5ff) but this time, the word covenant is not employed, it was also restated in Psalm 89:20-30. This covenant was really provoked by David himself. He moved to build a house for the Lord but the Lord ended up establishing his dynasty forever. Hence, one can rightly say, by the terms of this covenant, Yahweh elects David and his house for an eternal dynasty. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfill the terms of this renewed covenant. Next question will be, who are the Samaritans. The Samaritans were descendants of the Jews who remained in Palestine after the Assyrians defeated Israel and had intermarried with Assyrians. The implication is that they were Jews with impure blood or mixed blood. They, therefore,

> came from mixed marriages between Jews and Assyrian settlers who entered the promised land, so their very existence was a violation of God's law. They worshipped God on Mount Gerizim, where they built their own temple and sacrificed animals. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews who returned from the Exile. They were called 'that foolish people that dwell in Sichem (Shechem)' (Ecc. 50:25-26.) In 128 B.C. John Hyrcanus destroyed the temple on Mount Gerizim. From this point on, Jews and Samaritans truly had no dealings with each other (John 4:9) (Packer and Tenny, 509).

Jews see them as part of Gentiles and therefore excluded from the people of promise. The coming of Christ also brought good news for the Samaritans. They are part of the people Christ united back to the main fold with the blood he shed on the cross. The names, Hebrews, Jews,

Israelites, circumcision, people who are near, all stands for the same group of people, namely the people that descended from the great progenitor- Noah.

Jesus Christ was born, he lived and died a Jew. Before his physical entrance into the human history, Israel as people were growing, socializing and developing under the Torah and under one religion -Judaism. They have been factionalized into very many sects. These sects include, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Herodians, Samaritans and even the followers of John the Baptist. Jesus never supported any Jewish sect but went beyond all of them hence he could say without any equivocation, that in the new dispensation,

> A persons' righteousness should exceed that of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). He warned his disciples to 'beware . . . of the leaven (the doctrine) of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees' (Matt. 16:6). He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness (Matt. 23:1-36). He especially chided the Pharisees for their superficial methods of observing the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6). Over and over again, Jesus challenged the religious authorities of his day. He said, He came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it - suggesting that the Pharisees and Sadducees had already attempted to abolish the law by their interpretations (Packer and Tenny, 510).

In the same way, he did not align himself with the Samaritans. At a point he behaved as if he stands aloof from the needs of the Samaritans by ordering his disciples not to visit any Samaritan and Gentile cities (Matt. 10:5-7). He even brushed aside the Samaritan idea of worshipping only on Mount Gerizim (John 4:19-24). But at the appointed time, he was willing to visit a Samaritan village (Luke 9:25) and discussed with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42). To show that a good neighbour could come from any place, and that if care is not taken, Samaritans may be more caring than the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees and other Jewish leaders, he told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Again, when Jesus healed ten lepers, a Samaritan man was the only one who returned to thank him (Luke 17:11-19). When he commissioned his disciples he specifically sent them to the land of Samaria as well as the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

The Gentiles as Ritually Impure to the Jewish Standard.

Gentile comes from the Latin 'gens' - 'nation', a non-Jew. The distinction has its roots in the OT in the seven nations (Hebrew- goyim) not driven completely from the land (Josh 24:11). They were the original inhabitants that were suppressed so as to plant the chosen people of God. According to several traditions, the Israelites were enjoined to maintain strict separation from them in matters of religion, marriage, and politics (Exod. 23:28-33; Deut. 7:1-5; Joshua 23:4-13); but historically speaking, the amount of interchange between Israel and the peoples of the land seems to have been enormous (Suter: 338). If one has nothing to do with others in matters of religion, marriage, politics and even social interactions, it means that that person is completely ostracized. To say the least, the Gentiles to the Jews are nothing but lepers that must be avoided

by all means; they were seen like full blown 'AIDS' carriers. They were a hated race because of their idol worship. The Jews avoided even eating from the table of the Gentiles (Dan. 1:8-15; Tob.1:10-12).

This will help one to see evidence of a wall being erected between the Jews and Gentiles. Going through the OT, one discovers the existence of such barriers. It is as if to say that the world was created for the Jews and Gentiles were like weeds planted by the devil (2 Esdras 6:56-59). The Jewish use of the term Gentile (ethnē) is often reflected in the NT. Thus, the Gentiles illustrate the minimum of morality which deserves no praise (Matt. 5:47). They make long prayers of empty phrases (Matt. 6:7). The Christian who will not accept fraternal rebuke is to be regarded or taken like the Gentile and the tax collector (Matt. 18:17).

THE MISSION OF CHRIST IN EPHESIANS 2:11-22.

The Structure of the Book of Ephesians:

Eph. 2:11-22 is a unit. It begins with the Greek word- 'mnēmoneuete',- 'to remember' what the Gentiles were without Christ (v.11a) and end with another Greek word, 'sunoikodomeisthe' (v.22) 'you are now being built together' into the body of Christ. It starts by reminding the Ephesians what they were without Christ (v.19) and what they are now with Christ in relation to the Jews (v.22). Verse 19 reminds them what they were as aliens and verse 22 talks of what they have become now as members of the body of Christ. So verses 11-22 is a unit. For easy analysis of it, we shall divide it into three further subsections namely: (i) What the Gentiles were without Christ (2:11-12); (ii) The one body of Christ (2: 13-18); (iii) The one building that contains all (2:19-22).

What the Gentiles Were Without Christ (2:11-12):

Here the author of Ephesians addresses his readers as 'Gentiles by birth'. In fact, the contents of this letter indicate that it was intended for readers who were Gentile Christians (vv11-13; 3:1) who were probably located in Asia Minor. Nothing actually proves that any of the addressees were of Jewish heritage. The Letter itself was written most probably in late first century AD. At that period, the Church was becoming increasingly Gentile in composition. Generally, when one looks at the population of the church, one discovers that proportionately, those of Jewish heritage were increasingly becoming a minority and Gentiles increasingly becoming a majority (Arland, www.workingpreacher.org.). To show that this letter was addressed to the Gentiles, v.11 starts with the words 'dio' and 'mnēmoneuete'. Dio is a Greek term of conclusion; it can mean 'on this account,' 'consequently,' or 'therefore.' Mnemoneuete which is present imperative, active mood, from the verb, 'mnēmoneuō' meaning to 'remember'. The word calls for repentance, decision, call to mind, recall information, and gratitude as well as humility (Fritz, 1980: 526). Calling to mind is necessary because memory is the basis of learning and of motivation for future action. Mnēmoneuete appears about 21 times in the NT. It reminds us of the important function of festivals, and signs; they help us to remember things we may likely forget. In a positive sense,

remembering stimulates in people an attitude of gratitude for their present privilege as well as an attitude of humility, a good example is the striking contrasts of the before and after pictures presented in the opening verses of this chapter (2:1, 2,3). Negatively, remembering stimulates in people an attitude of acrimony as well as an attitude of revenge. It is used here in a positive sense. Hence, a 'remembrance that sharpens gratitude and strengthens faith in God through Christ. "This exercise of memory would deepen their humility, elevate their ideas of Divine grace, and incite them to ardent and continued thankfulness. The apostle honestly refers them to their previous Gentilism" (Eadie, www.easyenglish.info/bible.commentary). 'Hoti' (that), is a particle that gives the content of what is to be remembered. Another pivotal word in this verse is 'pote', it means formerly; can be translated as 'you were at one time', or 'at that time'. It is used about 48 times in the NT. It is a key word to this chapter and this verse in particular. It is also used variously in the OT (Deut. 5:15; cf.16:12). Thus, Gentiles were reminded of their former status in 2:11-12.

Before ever Gentiles came to be united with Christ, in the minds and heart of the Jews, they were 'uncircumcised' and they themselves were the 'circumcised'. This was introduced with the articled word 'ta ethne' (the nations). The implication of this name with article that governs it indicates that there seem to be two distinct sets of people in the whole world, the Jews and non Jews, the circumcised and uncircumcised. In this case, all non Jews are people of the nations or Gentiles. The Jews call all non Jews uncircumcised in a derogatory sense and proudly regard themselves as the circumcised. Circumcised is synonymous with the chosen of God and the uncircumcised is synonymous with godlessness. Uncircumcised is a translation of the Greek word, 'akrobustia' which means, 'an extreme flesh cover of the male sex organ. This appears about 20 times in the NT. The exact opposite of 'akrobustia' is 'peritome'. Peritome literally means, 'cut off around, it refers literally to cutting and removal of the foreskin. The author of Ephesians, is not actually referring here to the actual act of cutting of the extreme flesh that covers the mouth of the male sex organ but refers to all who are circumcised. Circumcision is nothing but external sign of the covenant established by God with the Jews through Abraham (Gen. 17). This mark was made manually (cheiropoiētou) 'in the flesh' (en sarki). Here it refers to the covering of the body -foreskin or prepuce. The circumcision is man-made and not divinely made (Lev. 26:1; Isa. 2:18; 16:12). Barclay puts it thus,

> The Gentiles were called the uncircumcision by those who laid claim to that circumcision which is physical and man-made thing. This was the first of the great divisions. The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. They said that the Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell; that God loved only Israel of all the nations that he had made; that the best of the serpents crushed, the best of the Gentiles killed. It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile woman in childbirth, for that would be to bring another Gentile into the world. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was absolute. If a Jew married a Gentile, the funeral of that Jew was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death; even to go into a Gentile house rendered a Jew

> unclean. Before Christ, the barriers were up; after Christ the barriers were down (1987:107).

The above is the exact picture of the type of relationship that existed between these two categories of human beings. No wonder why a Jew could afford to thank God for not having made him a Gentile, or a woman. Muddiman opines, "The contrast is not between 'manufactured' and 'natural', but between the result of human and divine action, sometimes with elements of another contrast between the literal and the metaphorical" (Muddiman,2001:118). The physical mark therefore create physical distinction between the Gentile and the Jew. It is good also to note that the practice of male circumcision was not confined exclusively to Jews in history; it was more widespread in the Ancient Near East, and Paul exploited this fact in Gal. 4:21ff, in his reference to Ishmael, the ancestor of the Edomites who, though circumcised and born from Abraham, lacked the freedom and maturity that constitute true sonship (Muddiman,2001:18-19). In the same way, the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria circumcise their males and females eight days after birth. It is only in the modern times that that of the female is regarded as 'mutilation' but from the earliest times, it is regarded as circumcision - 'ibeugwu'. In the context of Eph. 2:11, and in the opinion of Paul, circumcision and uncircumcision are mere names and indeed means nothing.

Verse 12, presents us with the contents of what they were asked to remember. When they were Gentiles they were without Christ (Christ-less). The implication is that they had no knowledge of the pre-existent 'word' (John 1:1,10-12; 1 Cor. 10:4-5) , they were without a country (country-less), without a covenant - diathēkē (covenant-less) which is an irrevocable decision which cannot be cancelled by anyone. They were without hope -echontes mē elpida (hopeless). The implication is that they have nothing to hope for since they were shut out of the covenant of promise. The promise of God is the only foundation of hope and therefore those to whom there is no promise have no hope (Acts 13:32-33; Gen. 12:1-3; 15:5-6,18) (Hodge, www.easyenglish). Again, they were without God -atheoi (god-less/atheist). This word is not used in the sense of active denial of God rather in the passive sense of unconnected with God. This word only appears here in the Greek Bible. "But in Classical Greek tragedy it refers to deviant individuals who actively exhibit impiety towards the gods or whom passively the gods have abandoned. One can rightly say that they were with five "less" qualities when they were separated with Christ (God-less, hope-less, Christ-less, country-less, and covenant-less). These were introduced thus, "hoti ēte to kairō ekeinō chōris Christou apēllotriōmenoi . . ." (that you were at that time without Christ, having being separated ...). Those are really highly uncomfortable words. The word that brings out the mind of Paul in this verse is apēllotriōmenoi. It has the idea of separation and estrangement. It means to make one unfriendly, hostile, or indifferent. It is a perfect term and thus expresses the permanence of the Gentile's condition i.e., desperate and settled state of being lost (Ezek. 14:5). Thus:

> The Temple in Jerusalem was itself a structure of several barriers. Outside the Temple there was a yard, called the court of the Gentiles and a wall. On the wall at intervals was

> placed a warning for a Gentile not to enter further on the penalty of death. On the other side of that wall, the next court was reserved for Jewish women. Another barrier kept them from going any further in. Inside that barrier only Jewish men were permitted, but only to find another barrier for the priests alone to enter. But even then, a final barrier existed where only the high priest could enter the sanctuary of the holy of holies, and that only once a year! How could there be peace as long as all these distinctions remained.? (Lorenzo, 2015: www.gci.org/bible/eph.).

It is all these barriers that Jesus came to remove so as to bring peace on earth. Jesus came to reconcile them to the Father through his death and resurrection. To make them not just members of the common wealth of Israel (politeia) but members of the new Israel or Church. Politeia is used here figuratively as an allusion to the privileged religious position of Israel in God's sight (Gen.12:1-3). "It indicates the government of Israel framed by God in which religion and polity were co-joined" (Fritz, 526). Jesus came that they would no longer be called strangers (chenoi) or foreigners from the covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19-24; 2 Sam. 7:12-17). In the calculation of the Jews, the Gentiles are excluded from the above promises (apaggelias). Jesus, according to v.12, came just to give hope to the hopeless and to allow the hopeless to have God as their father too (Donavan, 2015: www.lectionary.org.).

The One Body Of Christ (2: 13-18).

Verse 13 which is a verse of turning point, directly parallels verse 12 (alienation and togetherness) - the then and now; far and near. This theme continues to v.17 and even in vv19-22. Before looking at this section in detail, let us look at some key words that bring out the meaning of this section. The two Greek words: makran (adverb meaning far, far off) and egenēthēte (aorist passive indicative of eggus meaning 'near'). The terms 'far' and 'near' were used in rabbinical writings and indicated among other things non-Jews (far) and Jews (near) or those who were righteous and near God or those who were godless and far away (Fritz, 526). It was these two opposing beings that Christ united. The phrase, "to haimati tou Christou" (v.13) - the blood of Christ is a regular Pauline phrase in his letters (Rom 3:25; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25; Eph. 1:7). It is the power Paul believes that does the magic of reconciling all under one body. When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51). Some scholars argue that this symbolizes the fact that the barrier between men and God had been removed and that between mankind has also been removed (Eph. 2:14-15a). This is the emphasis of Paul in this section.

The Greek word, hē eirēnē (the article used with the predicate) 'shalom' remains the fruit of what Christ did on the cross for the Gentiles. It is also one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Christ through his blood removed the 'middle wall' - mesotoichon hence made both one, the Jews and Gentiles. The context identifies the middle wall, the dividing wall, the barrier "in four ways: it is the fact of separation between Israel and the nations; it has to do with the law and its statutes and interpretations; it is experienced in the enmity between Jews and Gentiles; it also

consists of the enmity of both Jews and Gentiles against God" (Fritz, 526). Another closely related word is phragmos - fence, partition which originally means fence erected as a sign of protection rather than separation. The implication is that it later became a sign of separation. Although this may be a figurative reference to the wall separating Gentiles from the inner court of the Jerusalem Temple, the noun in apposition, echthron suggests that the image is intended to depict the end of ethnic hostility between the two groups (Kobelski, 1990:888). The author used the aorist poiēsas. This is aorist active participle, meaning 'having made' amphoteros, 'both', that is both Jews and Gentiles. The author applied yet another aorist lusas from the verb luō meaning 'to loose, destroy, break down.' Aorist shows a completed action that is permanent. What was broken down was echthran - enmity, and hostility between the sworn enemies. Hence, Paul writes, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, ... for all of you are one in Christ Jesus . . ." (Gal. 3:28-29).

In order to seal completely the ongoing reconciliation, the author in v. 15 employed yet another verb that is aorist, act. particle namely katargēsas 'to nullify, to annul, to make of no effect.' He renders bunkum, irrelevant, no effect the commandment (entolē) or decree (dogma). Both commandment and dogma mean practically the same. In verse 16, the author of Ephesians who believes strongly on the permanence of what Christ did on the cross, used the Greek word, apokatallazē (aor. act. subjunctive of the verb apokatallassō) which means to restore, to change, to turn from hostility to friendship, to reconcile, a sort of restoration of mankind back to their original dignity in relationship with God (Col. 1:20,22; 2 Cor. 5:18). It is the death of Christ on the cross that did all that. The Cross restored humanity (Adam) back to God; Jews and Gentiles were brought together in one body (en heni sōmati). V.17 has a verb in aorist which communicates to us part of what Christ did namely euēggelisato 'to preach,' and this preaching was also done once and for all. He preached nothing but eirēnē 'peace' to both 'far' and 'near.' The original meaning of 'far' and 'near' for second Isaiah was Jews in both cases, either in exile or still in Judah. Later rabbinic texts take those 'far off' to be Gentile proselytes. But in v. 13, the author identifies them with Gentile Christians. "The Cornelius episode in Acts 10 illustrates in narrative form the meaning of v.17- the god-fearer joins the people of God through faith in Christ- and Acts 10:36 in particular summarizes Jesus' earthly ministry in terns very similar to those used in this verse" (Muddiman, 137). V.18, tells us that it was through Christ and what he did on the cross that both 'far' and 'near' have prosagōgē - 'access' or 'entrance' to God (Rom. 5:1-2). Everyone in Nigeria knows how difficult it is to have access to important personalities like the president, Senators, ministers, Governors, Pope, Bishops etc. But Christ did that through his blood on the cross. This verse is a natural conclusion to the hymn that started in v14 (Muddiman, 137).

The One Building That Contains All (2:19-22):

This section follows the hymn directly. The tone of the chapter changes from doctrine to exhortation; from first or third person statements to second person address; and there is also a shift in perspective from the theme of peace and reconciliation between two parties, both of whom equally need it, back to the emphasis on Gentiles acquiring the status that the Jews already enjoy (Muddiman, 138). not from the point of view of becoming another set of Jews but people who fully understand their God given vocation. This section is introduced by double particles - "ara" and "oun" - 'then' and 'therefore'. Both are always used to show the progression of an argument. They have connective sense implying a consequence. The double particles in combination are intended to imply logical connection, one simply reinforcing the other and both are used to sum up the argument of the whole section (Fritz, 527). They were used together for the sake of emphasis. The implication is that, because of what God has accomplished in Jesus, Gentiles are no longer (ouketi) foreigners, strangers, aliens, visitors, sojourners (paroikos) (Gen. 23:3; Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11) but are now fellow citizens (sumpolitēs) in union with the saints (Eph. 1:1,5; 3:8; 5:3; 4:12; 6:18); this new position gives them legal rights which includes full participation in the covenant promises not according to the old covenant but according to the new covenant that was sealed with the blood of Christ -the true lamb of God. They are also members of the same household (oikeios) which included people from all the nations of the world. This was achieved without any war but peacefully and gently except with the shedding of Christ's blood. A citizen and a member of a household is one who has voting rights in a Greek polis; members of the household include not just those who are related by birth but also the clients of a patron (Muddiman, 139). This may help us to think back in the household of Abraham when God advised him to get himself, his son and all slaves born in his household circumcised. All of them from that moment became covenant people (Gen 17:10-14, 23-27). In contrast to the Pax Romana, the preaching of peace in Ephesians does not involve terror, intimidation, or military action; it is the peace that comes through the cross and belongs to the ekklesia - the peace of Christ (MacDonald, 2010:837). In the NT, the saints refers to ordinary Christians (Acts 9:13, 41; Rom. 1:7; 12:13; 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1) but today in the Catholic church it refers to super Christians, those who lived and died exemplarily.

This new household of God which the Gentiles found themselves in has been established/built (epoikodomētheutes) on the foundation (themelios) of the apostles (apostolōn) and prophets (prophētōn). The Greek word epoikodomētheutes aorist passive participle; this expresses the idea that this has been achieved and was achieved on the foundation of apostolōn and prophētōn. Both words are in genitive case plural. It shows that the foundation belongs to them but does not solely belong to them but on Jesus as the corner stone, foundation stone (akrogōniais) or key stone (1 Pet. 2:6). This is a metaphor which describes the church as a building founded on the apostles and prophets. The implication is that they are the recipients of God's revelation and official bearers of the Christian tradition. It was through them that all others would be incorporated in Christ. Christ is presented as the Corner stone that carries the foundation or that gives meaning to the foundation. The Corner stone, therefore, "refers to the stone situated at the corner of a building from which the builders take their bearings for all the other walls. Thus,

Christ would be presented as the one who by his presence defines the shape and scope of the church, points it in the way it is to go, and enables its sturdy construction" (Laymon, 321). The implication is that, even if the apostles and prophets form the foundation, they do not in any way replace Christ but they take their meaning from him as the cornerstone. The corner stone determines the shape of every building. This fact is corroborated by Christ's mandate to Peter as the rock on which the Church is built (Matt. 16:18). This fact is also accepted as a fundamental truth which no one questions (Rev. 21:14; Gal. 2:9; 1 Cor.3:10-17; Col. 1:23; 2:27). The use of household members or building has a lot to tell us as regards the unity of the church Arland, www.workingpreacher.org.).

Another Greek word that emphasizes the fact that Christ has broken every barrier and has united all together is the word sunarmologoumenē which is present passive participle and comes from the word sunarmologeō meaning 'to fit together'. "In construction terms, it represents the whole of the elaborate process by which stones are fitted together" (Fritz, 527). It shows that all parts of the building are being fitted together and thus grows (auzō) into a shrine (naon) that is holy in the Lord. A whole building (pasa oikodomē) could mean also 'every building'. A community that welcomes barriers that separate members excludes God in their midst. The verb sunoikodomeisthe is present passive indicative. The present tense is used because the building is still going on . This dwelling-place is a place of rest for all, a home for all. It is not a place of discriminations, it is a place where everyone is a stakeholder.

Application in the Nigerian Catholic context

The Church in Nigeria is not different from Christian churches in other parts of the world. What is obtainable in the Nigerian Church is clearly replicated in other countries of the world. The greatest obstacle or barrier that prevents Nigerian Christian church to be growing from strength to strength after denominationalism is ethnicity which culminates most often in ethnicism which is a strong acceptance of one's ethnic group to the detriment of others'. Nigeria is a conglomeration of very many ethnic groups. Nigeria as a nation, is firstly divided along religious line after that, ethnic line takes over. Nwaoru does not believe that God made us from Adam to be divided along ethnic line hence he writes, "Ethnic bias is a product of particular historical and not ontological conditions of human relations" (Nwaoru, 2004: 106). He based his argument on the closer look at the bible especially the Old Testament, where one discovers that from Gen. 1-11 one talks of a tribe but after the call of Abraham from Gen. 12, the tone changes, tribalism sets in. Nwaoru sees Ruth as a breaker of ethnic boundaries and as one who transcends ethnic bias and got married to Mahlon (Ruth 4:10) (Nwaoru, 112). There is no Christian denomination (be it Catholics, Anglicans, Pentecostals of different persuasions) in Nigeria that is devoid of ethnic attachment or ethnic affiliation. Olorunmolu in his reflections on Acts 6:1; Acts 15; Gal. 2:11-14 opines, "Ethnicity as an issue has been with the church right from the beginning. But the church of the NT era was able to cope well with the issue. So learning from the experiences of

that church, the church of other eras and various regions of the world, including the West African sub-region, should be able to handle well this same issue . . . among members of church" (Olorunmolu, 2004:123).

In the catholic church for instance, we have very many problems bordering on ethnicity especially on the appointment of Church leaders. Late Bishop Makozi of Port Harcourt in his opening remarks during the official opening of 2004 CIWA Theology Week on the Theme: Ethnicity And Christian Leadership in West African Sub-Region expresses fear thus, "The rate at which some church members promote disunity is becoming very alarming to say the least. The creation of new diocese and the appointment of bishops have become a game play in which ethnocentricism or tribalism has seemingly become the order of the day in certain sectors in recent times" (Nwaigbo,15). It is good to note that here in Nigeria the Catholic bishops have been speaking against this ugly trend, though there is no doubt that some are paying lips service to that. For instance, as far back as 1972, in a Memorandum on the Social Problems of Nigeria, the bishops condemned all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, and others, for them any form of discrimination based on ethnic groups (tribalism) should find no place in our social life (Shineller, 66-7). This is a collective writing, only God knows whether each of them accepted that common stance with their full conviction; because part of the problem of the catholic church has been mostly clergy inflicted problems. In Nigeria, the posting of catholic priests to some parishes and the appointment of bishops to some dioceses have been opposed by the people (Catholics) especially the clergy of such parishes and dioceses mainly on ethnic grounds. The case of the Catholic Diocese of Port Harcourt at the end of Nigerian civil war and that of Catholic Diocese of Ahiara come to mind here. Aharia is the most recent and has lingered to a scandalous level that people who are outside the diocese have even started questioning the Christianity of the Christians of that diocese. Even outside Nigeria, Shorter reported that "In the 1960's Catholics in a Ghanaian diocese burnt their bishop's Episcopal throne outside the cathedral because he was not of their ethnic group" (Shorter: 1990). As if continuing from this, Olorunmoru says, "In a number of other African dioceses, including some in Nigeria, the clergy have boycotted their newly appointed bishop and in other cases missionary administrators have been appointed because of incurable ethnic rivalries among the diocesan clergy. The situation in non Catholic churches in the sub-region is even worse, leading to frequent break-up of some churches, while many others are being founded and operated purely along ethnic lines" (Olorunmolu:139-140). Ethnocentricism is the greatest barrier that divides Nigerian Christian church into factions and if not checked, the Christianity of Christians in Nigeria should be called to question. Ethnicism is against the ethics of Christ who though a Jew in all respects and at the same time clearly disassociated himself from a good deal of Jewish authorities especially when it comes to following the law sheepishly (Mark 2:23-28; Luke 7:36-50). He never made his mission as what belongs to the Jews alone, instead from the onset, he made it universal as it was from the beginning (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47-48).

Evaluation and Conclusion: Christ has broken every barrier that divides people from one another and from God, thus securing peace and unity for all. Through his death on the cross, he has reconciled mankind to one another and to God. If God, the Father of Jesus is our Father, we ought to live amicably with one another and shun anything that divides us according to the mind of Christ. The primary responsibility of all followers of Christ in Nigeria, therefore, is to be instrument of peace and thus peace initiators.

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